At first, Rei Yuki didn’t feel that something was wrong. She was just eating a simple meal of rice and fish.
But after dinner, she suddenly felt a filling sensation in her chest that needed to be released.

Bathroom!
She didn’t find the vomiting too concerning at first.

**URK!**

**BLECH!**

**BLARGH!**

**HUFF PUFF...**

**HUFF PUFF**

Mom, are you okay?

I’m fine, sweetie!

I must have ate something dirty.
But the vomiting happened again...

And again...

Blargh!

Urgh!

And again...

Blegh!

Eventually, she consulted a doctor.

I keep throwing up after eating something. My chest starts to feel uncomfortable. There's no pain though. Just discomfort.

Mmmhm.

I said I didn't feel pain though. It was my chest, not my stomach. Will these pills really work?

I think you're experiencing some sort of stomach pain. Here, these pills should help.
The medication Rei was initially offered didn't make her feel better. Instead, her condition got worse. She often found herself woken up in the middle of the night by the urge to throw up. Sometimes it happened one hour after eating. Other times, it happened three to four hours after eating. She would wake up tired the next day.

Eventually, she became afraid of leaving her house.

And Rei still didn't know what was wrong with her. She needed someone to give her illness a name to make sense of the experience.

The easiest solution seemed to be not eating.

Not again. Oh no...
Eventually, she consulted a new doctor.

**DOCTOR**

*You have **gallstones** in your gallbladder. It will have to be surgically removed.*

**PATIENT**

*I need you to see the hospital immediately.*

Finally! Someone has identified it for me! But wait, I need to go to the hospital?
Okay, Mrs. Yuki, you have two options. We could either remove your gallbladder now or you could schedule an appointment and we could remove it later.

I'll schedule an appointment.

Wait, are you sure about this?

I'm sure.

Really, it wouldn't be a problem.

No, I want to schedule an appointment.

...Fine.

For the American doctor, it was strange that Rei wasn't interested in removing the gallstones immediately. But Rei grew up with British biomedicine. Unlike American biomedicine, British biomedicine emphasizes caution.

Is surgery the best way to treat gallstones?

Does my gallbladder need to be removed now?

Could I try to solve the problem with something less invasive?

Do I really have to have the surgery right now?

Before scheduling her appointment, Rei researched the surgeons and hospitals.

And consulted friends for advice.

After researching, Rei felt prepared for her operation. She trusted her chosen surgeon and hospital to solve her problem and take good care of her.

I'm ready for this!
On Saturday at 7am, Rei had her gallbladder removed at the hospital. The surgery took about three hours.

When she woke up, she was so tired and dizzy that she couldn't even sit up. The only things that hurt, though, were the three scars on her stomach.

Mrs. Yuki, how are you feeling?

I'm fine, I think.

She's ready to go home.

Rei was released from the hospital the next day with bottles of antibiotics and painkillers.
Normally, when you’re ill, you have certain rights and responsibilities.

You have a right to neglect your social roles and obligations.

You have the right to demand care.

In exchange, you must acknowledge the sick role as undesirable.

You must also seek out medical help and get better.

Illness defined from a patient’s suffering, not a physician’s diagnosis.

But although Rei didn’t particularly enjoy the initial recovery phase...

Followed up on appointments with a doctor after her surgery...

And took her new medications...

She still had to fulfill all of her responsibilities by herself.

Drive daughter to school.

Fill the day’s food bowl.

Vacuum the house.

Buy groceries.

Cook dinner and break.

Sell more books for my business.

And it became even harder when she ran out of painkillers.

But Rei recovered.
While the recovery could have gone better, Rei thought her treatment was satisfactory. Upon reflection, she thinks that maintaining good health means...

Eating a healthy diet,

Having enough information to make informed decisions,

And paying attention to your body.

And she also thanks biomedicine for letting her live a more comfortable life.